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NINTH ROUND OF TALKS OVER LAC STAND-OFF UNDER WAY

The Corps Commander-level talks to address the situation in Eastern Ladakh began at Moldo on Chinese side on Sunday

INDIA FIRM ON DEMANDING STATUS QUO ANTE

While India is demanding that China pull back its troops from all stand-off points and restore status quo ante along the Line of Actual Control, the latter wants India to first withdraw its soldiers deployed on strategic heights on the southern bank of the Pangong Tso lake. Indian jawans continue to hold their positions despite the merciless Himalayan winter

TIES 'IN DIFFICULT PHASE' DUE TO CHINA

- On December 9 last, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had said 'five differing explanations' by China for its deployment on the LAC had pushed bilateral ties into its most difficult phase
- It's not a problem of lack of communication. The fact is there are ample pacts but the other side is not following them, he said

Round 8
OF BILATERAL TALKS HAD TAKEN PLACE ON NOVEMBER 6

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Concern over proposal to tie forests to WPI

Formula has been suggested in draft to panel

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

IN what is being seen as a severe threat to the country's green cover, the Union environment ministry has proposed that forests be treated as tradable commodity having value as per the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), to cut down the cost of diversion of pristine forests for infrastructure projects.

In a draft note on the revision of the Net Present Value (NPV) of forest land diverted for non-forest purposes sent to a Committee of Secretaries (CoS), the ministry on January 22 suggested the interim arrangement of aligning the rates with the WPI till the information sought for revision in NPV rates as proposed by experts of the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, are compiled.

"Keeping in view that more than three years had elapsed since the NPV came into force, the MoEF&CC proposed to revise it based on the WPI," said the ministry in the draft.

The sticking point was articulated in clause 1.30 of the note. It said the IIFM had proposed scaling up NPV rates by as much as four times the existing figures, and warned that the higher tariff could impact ongoing power and other infrastructure sector projects. To soften the blow, the ministry is seeking to align the rates with WPI, as the escalation that way would not be as steep.

However, experts expressed concern over the proposed system because high NPV rates are meant to be a deterrent, but WPI is a facilitator. Kanchi Kohli, Legal Research Director at CPR-Namati Environment Justice Program, said: "This proposal further embeds forests as a commodity to be traded through instruments such as the WPI. It is not focused at protecting forests or forest rights. Ironically the success of this exercise is only dependent on more forests being lost."

WITH THIS ISSUE THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST edex 32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF edex (TABLOID) AND 4 OF CITY EXPRESS

QUARRIES RAIDED IN MANDYA DISTRICT

Several stone quarrying and crushing units in Channakere and Karadahalli villages of Mandya district were raided on Sunday and hundreds of electric detonators and gelatin sticks were seized by the district authorities.

EXPLOSIVES MAY HAVE LANDED IN SHIVAMOGGA FROM ANDHRA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga, Bengaluru

COMING under attack from the Opposition for his remarks on regularising illegal stone quarries in the state, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Sunday stressed that only those unauthorised mines which meet regulations can apply for regularisation and it will be considered as per law.

The officials will conduct a spot inspection and permission will be given only if it does not cause any inconvenience to people, he said.

The CM said the problem of illegal mining is widespread and added that he has given directions to district deputy commissioners to stop all illegal mining with immediate effect. "This problem is prevalent not only in Shivamogga, but across the state," he rued.

A case in point is Gadag district where there are 65 legal quarries near Adrahalli, Nelugal, Chennapattana and Nadihalli villages, as per the records of Mines and Geology Department. Of these, 49 quarries are operating while the Gadag Forest department has issued notice to six quarries and 10 other quarries have stopped working. However, villagers say that there are many illegal stone quarries in the region and locals have also witnessed minor accidents.

Meanwhile, the preliminary investigation into the blast at a stone-crushing unit at Hunasodu near Shivamogga on Thursday night has indicated that the explosives was brought from Andhra Pradesh. FULL REPORT: P4

FAMILIES OF BLAST VICTIMS CLUELESS

Two of the six workers who died the Hunasodu explosion, were the sole bread-winners for their families. The kin of Manjunath (35) say they do not even know what what kind of job he was doing. The family of Praveen (36) too are clueless about how he died.

GREEN CARPET

Chepauk pitch to have 'English' look for Tests

VENKATA KRISHNA B @ Chennai

V RAMESH KUMAR has an MBA in international business. Growing up in Tiruppur – India's textile hub—he wanted to be an athlete. He even represented Tamil Nadu in 100m hurdles in open nationals. An entrepreneur who runs a garment and dying factory which employs around 700 people, these days he is camped in Chennai for some other reason.

Ramesh, 43, a certified BCCI curator, will oversee the pitch preparation for India's upcoming two Tests against England from February 5 at MA Chidambaram Stadium. He might be young for a curator but, in TN cricket, he already has a reputation for making sportive wickets.

Ramesh was the one who laid turf wickets at Salem, Tiruppur and Coimbatore: all BCCI approved venues to host first-class cricket. It was this trait that made TNCA give him this huge responsibility. The Chepauk pitch, over the couple of seasons, has come under criticism, including from MS Dhoni for its slow nature.

The last time Chennai hosted a Test match in 2016, it provided a flat strip and a repeat of it would also affect India's chances of making it to the Word Test Championship final. P5

UP diesel sale bar to stymie farm rally lifted

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A circular issued by the Gazipur police in eastern Uttar Pradesh advising fuel outlets not to tank up tractors ahead of the proposed farmers' parade in New Delhi was withdrawn after it drew flak on social media on Sunday.

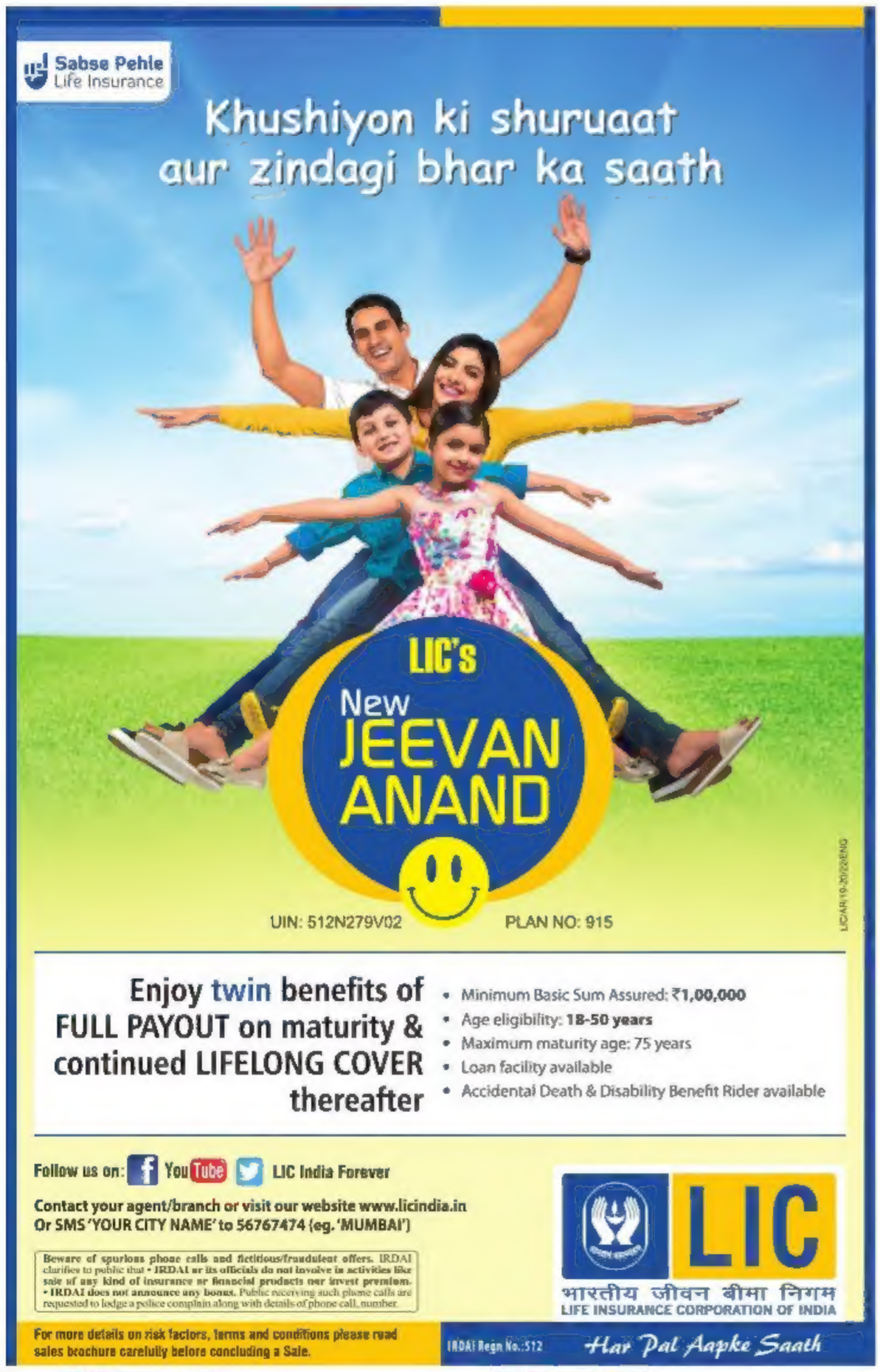
Ghazipur SP Om Prakash Singh sought to play down the circular, claiming it was issued by a station officer two days ago. "It has been withdrawn," he added.

The circular issued by station officer of Sohawal in Ghazipur refers to the 'high alert' ahead of the farmers' rally, and tells fuel outlet owners not to sell diesel to tractors. P7

EXPRESS READ

Wife accuses MUDA chief of murder attempt

Bengaluru: The wife of Mangaluru Urban Development Authority Commissioner G T Dinesh Kumar has filed a complaint against him for allegedly trying to kill her, besides harassing her for dowry. The police have registered a case against him. P5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